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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, October 1, 1937.

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "HOT, NOURISHING LUNCHES FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN". Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C.

--ooOoo--

One zippy day last week I was visiting a friend of mine--the mother of three husky boys. As she got them ready for school that morning I watched closely to see what they were taking with them. They all had pencils, and books, and tablets. Yes, each one had a clean handkerchief. But there was something missing that puzzled me.

"Alice", I said, "you've forgotten to put up lunch for the boys".

If you're a graduate of the old school lunch box days you know what a major calamity that is. But Alice just laughed and answered,

"Oh, we've had hot lunches at school for two years".

"Hot lunches", I asked, "in a small rural school like yours? Isn't that awfully expensive? Who does all the work? What started it all?"

My questions rolled out in rapid succession. When I had completed my queries she explained.

She told me proudly how her Farm Bureau unit in cooperation with the parent-teacher's association in their school had started the lunches. They had financed the simple equipment and hired a woman to cook the meals five noons a week.

Then at the end of the year the hot lunch had been acknowledged a success. The children were doing better school work. They attended school more regularly. They gained in height and in weight. And to top it all off they were obviously much happier with their hot lunches.

So the school board had been convinced and had made provisions to carry on the work. Now the school has a year-round hot lunch served at cost. If there are any children who can't afford even this small amount they get their lunches free. The parent-teacher's association contributes money for this purpose.

To me the whole thing sounded like a fairy story. Imagine sitting down at noon to eat a hot lunch just as though you were home with Mother and Dad. It certainly must be more pleasant than devouring sandwiches while hanging on the fire escape or huddled around the furnace in the basement the way I used to do at school.

Of course, Alice's school is unusually progressive. Not all the school boards see things in that light. Not all communities have such far-seeing, efficient civic organizations. There are still thousands of children who must eat a

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cold school lunch.

But there are other schools over the nation setting up a hot lunch in one of its various forms. The school lunch program of the Works Progress Administration in the past year and one half fed over one million undernourished children. Think of it--one million children had hot school lunches in place of a hastily packed cold lunch or no lunch at all.

These lunchrooms were set up as emergency measures, but they have met with such favor in the communities that many of them will probably be established permanently by the school boards. They have helped thousands of needy children raise standards of health and scholarship.

Nearly 600,000 children ate school lunches provided by cooperative extension workers in 1936. In still other schools various civic organizations cooperated. In some, teen-age 4-H club girls organized the lunchrooms. In others the teacher herself was the motive force.

The success of these various lunchrooms is proving that no school is too small or too poor to have some sort of a hot lunch for its students. It is also proving that the extra effort expended to establish these lunches definitely pays in the better health of school children.

In some cases the school lunch consists of only 1 hot dish. Often even that must be prepared at home and warmed in a water bath at school. More often, the hot dish is prepared at school. Only schools with fairly complete kitchen equipment serve the whole lunch.

To be most beneficial the school lunch must be other things besides "hot". It must be nourishing. And it must fit into the daily diet of the children. In some schools the weekly menu is sent home to the parents so that the mother may make her meals at home harmonize with the meals served at school.

Many schools serve only one hot dish at noon. In these cases the children bring the rest of their meal with them. What should make up the rest of the menu?

According to the Bureau of Home Economics the week's school lunch menu should include beside the main dish the following items. Each day for each child at least one full glass of milk. Each day some fresh fruit for dessert. Twice a week - tomatoes.

I'll repeat that again because it's a good rule to remember. Milk each day--at least one full glassful for each child. Tomatoes twice a week because of their high vitamin value. Fruit every day.

That fruit every day should be easier than usual to manage this year. There's been an abundance of pears and peaches and grapes. And now coming into season is the bumper apple crop of 1937 with its promise of apples at lower prices

If your child gets those essentials along with the hot main dish and bread and butter sandwiches you may be pretty sure he'll be fit to cope with parsing verbs and learning elusive historical facts.

